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Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections: election of 47 members of the Human Rights Council

Note verbale dated 19 April 2006 from the Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations addressed to the Secretariat

The Permanent Mission of India presents its compliments to the Secretariat of the United Nations and has the honour to refer to its letter of 5 April 2006 announcing India's candidature to the Human Rights Council, and to forward a document detailing India's voluntary pledges and commitments for promotion and protection of human rights (see annex).

The Government of India is committed to make a positive contribution to make the Human Rights Council a strong, effective and efficient body capable of promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms for all.

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Annex to the United Nations dated 19 April 2006 from the Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations addressed to the Secretariat

Voluntary pledges and commitments by India

India is seeking election to the Human Rights Council at the elections to be held at the United Nations in New York on 9 May 2006.

India has a long tradition of promoting and protecting human rights. India was privileged to be in the forefront of the struggle against apartheid even before its independence. India's commitment to promoting and protecting human rights flows from the realization that in a truly pluralistic society, the growth and well-being of citizens can only be guaranteed through a culture of protection and promotion of human rights.

The Indian Constitution enshrines India's commitment to human rights by guaranteeing to its citizens fundamental political and civil rights. Special provisions for the progressive realization and enforcement of economic, social and cultural rights have also been provided for constitutionally. India has taken an important initiative for the empowerment of women by reserving one third of all seats for women in urban and local self-government, thus bringing over one million women at the grass-roots level into political decision-making. With the launch of the National Rural Employment Guarantee programme on 1 February 2006, the right to work has been operationalized in India.

The independent and impartial Indian judiciary has delivered far-reaching pronouncements on the protection and promotion of human rights. The National Human Rights Commission, a powerful and independent body, monitors human rights developments in India and shares its experience and expertise with its counterparts in other countries. The free and independent media in India plays a crucial role in promoting respect for and monitoring of human rights. Civil society in India is among the most vibrant anywhere in the world.

India is a committed supporter of the United Nations human rights system and the promotion and protection of human rights is ingrained in its domestic and foreign policy. It has been active in deliberations on human rights in international forums and in the development of widely accepted international norms. India is a large, democratic, multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multilingual, and multicultural society, whose presence on the new Human Rights Council would bring a perspective of straddling all divides of pluralism, moderation and balance from a country that has consistently demonstrated its commitment to human rights and fundamental freedoms in practice.

Against this backdrop, India voluntarily makes the following pledges and commitments:

- India will continue to abide by its national mechanisms and procedures to promote and protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all its citizens.
- India will maintain the independence and autonomy, as well as genuine powers of investigation of national human rights bodies, including the National

Human Rights Commission, the National Commission for Women, the National Commission for Minorities, the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and the National Commission for Backward Classes, as mandated by Indian constitution and laws.

- India will continue to foster a culture of transparency, openness and accountability in the functioning of the Government, as enacted in the path-breaking Right to Information Act.

- India will continue to encourage efforts by civil society in seeking to protect and promote human rights.

- India will continue to work towards progressive realization of the right to work.

- India will be expanding the implementation of its recently instituted Rural Employment Guarantee Programme, which provides for 100 days of assured employment annually to every rural household in the country.

- India will continue to promote the social, economic and political empowerment of women in India by affirmative actions, gender mainstreaming in national planning, gender budgeting and formation of women self-help groups. India will work towards the elimination of discrimination and violence against women through legislative measures as well as effective implementation of existing policies.

- India, having actively and constructively participated in the multilateral negotiations that led to the establishment of the new Human Rights Council, will work to make the Human Rights Council a strong, effective and efficient body capable of promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms for all.

- India will engage constructively in the evolution of modalities and mandates of the Human Rights Council as envisaged in General Assembly resolution 60/251, and in the reform of the United Nations human rights machinery.

- India will participate actively in the work of the Human Rights Council in norm-setting in the field of human rights.

- India will participate constructively in developing modalities for universal periodic review by the Human Rights Council and in reviewing and strengthening the system of special procedures and other expert mechanisms of the Council.

- India will continue to support the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, including through making regular voluntary contributions, so as to strengthen the promotion and protection of human rights worldwide.

- India will strive for the full realization of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development.

- India will continue to support United Nations bodies, including the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Democracy Fund, that have a role in contributing to the protection and

promotion of human rights. India recently contributed $0.9 million United States dollars ($) to UNICEF and $10 million to the United Nations Democracy Fund.

- India will work actively with other United Nations Member States and relevant United Nations bodies for renewal and reform of the United Nations treaty-body system.
- India will work towards promotion and protection of human rights, based on the principles of cooperation and genuine dialogue.
- India will cooperate with States, upon request, in their implementation of human rights obligations through capacity-building by way of technical cooperation, human rights dialogues and exchange of experts.
- India will continue to actively support domestic and international processes that seek to advance empowerment of women and women's rights and gender equality.
- India will continue to actively support domestic and international processes that advance the rights of the child.
- India will work for the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Copenhagen Declaration and Plan of Action and other outcomes of the major United Nations international conferences.
- India will continue to actively participate in and support the negotiations for a new United Nations Convention for Persons with Disabilities.